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## Career self-efficacy among Lithuanian adolescents in sports schools

Andrius Brusokas, Romualdas Malinauskas\*

*Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education, Sporto 6, Kaunas 44221, Lithuania*

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on career self-efficacy among Lithuanian adolescents in sports schools. In total, 224 basketball players participated: 116 aged 15–16 and 108 aged 17–18. It was found that there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the sources of career self-efficacy between basketball players aged 17–18 and those aged 15–16, with the former being influenced to a greater extent by the following sources: vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, positive emotional arousal and accomplishment in performance. The comparison of career self-efficacy among those aged 15–16 and 17–18 showed that the former had a higher level of career self-efficacy.

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**Keywords:** Career education, career self-efficacy, sports school, adolescents, basketball players;

**1. Introduction**

Career is a sequence of various socially significant human roles related to self-expression and individual professional development and reflecting the vision and style of life of an individual (Betz, 2007). Self-efficacy is defined as one's confidence in personal skills as well as the belief that one can effectively direct personal behaviour to reach the goals set. Self-efficacy is the expectation and conviction of an individual in relation to how successfully he/she can perform a certain task. In terms of this definition, self-efficacy may be assessed as a prerequisite for the productivity and efficiency of the activities of an individual (Bandura, 1997). Career self-efficacy plays an important role in studying the career objectives of teenagers and young people and the peculiarities of their career choices (Bandura et al., 2001; Wolfe & Betz, 2004). The development of career self-efficacy is especially helpful for teenagers and young people who engage in sports to a great extent or belong to an at-risk group due to learning difficulties (O'Brien et al., 1999).

The indicator of career self-efficacy helps determine the behaviour of an individual in different situations when planning his/her career. High self-efficacy in complex situations helps to overcome feelings of doubt, various unpleasant occurrences and conflicts with much greater ease. Career self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to perform the actions related to further career choices (Anderson & Betz, 2001; Lent & Hackett, 1987). Career self-efficacy is associated with many psychosocial factors, such as self-esteem, anxiety and internal locus of control (Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Muris, 2002).

Bandura (1997) defined four major sources of self-efficacy (i.e. experience of mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion and emotional state). It was determined that self-efficacy could be successfully altered by

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\* Corresponding Author :Romualdas Malinauskas. Tel.: +370-37-302-672  
E-mail address: [r.malinauskas@lkka.lt](mailto:r.malinauskas@lkka.lt)

manipulating the information sources related to effectiveness and by performing tasks (Malinauskas & Brusokas, 2010; McAuley et al., 2001). However, Bandura (1997) did not study career self-efficacy and its sources. Thus, the question of the connection between career self-efficacy and career-seeking in the teenage years and at a young age remains unanswered. This study is relevant because it may help understand what motivates Lithuanian adolescents in sports schools to look for career possibilities.

Comprehending ones' lack of abilities most often causes low career self-efficacy, which in turn weakens the wish to seek a career (Betz & Hackett, 1981). In contrast, people with high career self-efficacy usually also have high career ambitions (Bandura, 1993). People with high career self-efficacy tend to set higher career goals and objectives and show more perseverance to achieve such goals (Bandura, 1993; 1997). The level of career self-efficacy may be altered: low career self-efficacy can be raised and high career self-efficacy can be improved to an even higher degree. Also, career self-efficacy is a prerequisite when seeking successful results from an activity and it may have an impact on behaviour independently of a person's knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1993). This study is based upon the conviction that a person with high career self-efficacy tends to seek a way of life which will grant him/her career possibilities. The relevance of the study is not in doubt because there is a lack of scientific research in this field, especially in terms of the career self-efficacy of students playing sports, as we failed to find any such studies.

This study is original because career self-efficacy among adolescents in sports schools has not been studied in detail. However, it is a complex matter to research levels and sources of career self-efficacy. This study poses the question: what are the features of career self-efficacy among adolescents in sports schools (young basketball players)? The purpose of the study is to analyse the career self-efficacy of young basketball players (15–16 and 17–18 year olds) in sports schools.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Sample and procedure

The study was carried out during the school year of 2010–2011. The sample size of the study consisted of 116 young basketball players of 15–16 years old and 108 young basketball players of 17–18 years old (junior and youth groups). A two-stage selection was employed. First, two basketball sports schools from Kaunas and Vilnius were randomly selected from the list of Kaunas and Vilnius basketball sports schools. Later, all the basketball students in the cadet group (15–16 years old) and the junior group (17–18 years old) from the two sports schools participated in the study. When questioning the respondents, the ethical and legal study principles were upheld, i.e. every participant expressed their consent to participate in the study, the goal of the study was explained to the respondents, and the anonymity of the participants was ensured. The questionnaires were distributed during training sessions.

### 2.2. Instruments: data collection and analysis

The *Career Self-Efficacy Sources Scale* (CSESS) (Anderson & Betz, 2001) was employed to assess the sources of career self-efficacy (i.e. experience of mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion and positive or negative emotional state). The scale consists of 20 statements. Each of the statements is graded on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 = never and 5 = very often) and the respondent selects the most suitable option. The scale contains five subscales (each with four statements): experience of mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion, positive emotional state and negative emotional state. When the data were analysed, the mean was calculated for each subscale and this value indicates the source of career self-efficacy. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.76). The internal consistency of each subscale was measured in the same way resulting in a range from 0.69 to 0.84.

The short form of the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale* consists of 25 statements (CDMSE-SF) (Betz et al., 1981). This scale shows the level of one's self-confidence when performing actions related to the selection of one's further career. Each statement is evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 = not at all confident and 5 =

extremely confident), the respondent choosing the most appropriate option. Internal consistency was measured using Cornbrash's alpha coefficient (0.64). When the data were analysed, the mean was calculated for each respondent and this value indicates the level of career self-efficacy, the value distribution corresponding to the regular probability distribution.

The statistical hypotheses were verified using Student's t-test because the data distribution was normal.

### 3. Results

The analysis of the sources of career self-efficacy in the cadet group (15–16 years old) and the junior group (17–18 years old) and the calculation of the means of the indicators showed that the basketball players aged 17–18 were better at employing vicarious experiences ( $3.31 \pm 0.59$ ). The effect of vicarious experiences gained by observing the successful activities of others (modelling) was lower for those aged 15–16 ( $3.13 \pm 0.74$ ), a finding confirmed by the statistically significant difference ( $t(222) = -2.02$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

Table 1: Statistical indicators of the career self-efficacy sources of respondents ( $M \pm SD$ )

Sources of career self-efficacy	Basketball players: cadets ( $N=116$ )	Basketball players: juniors ( $N=108$ )	t	p
Vicarious experience	$3.13 \pm 0.74$	$3.31 \pm 0.59$	-2.02	$p < 0.05$
Verbal persuasion	$3.08 \pm 0.76$	$3.27 \pm 0.68$	-1.97	$p < 0.05$
Positive emotional arousal	$3.16 \pm 0.66$	$3.34 \pm 0.63$	-2.09	$p < 0.05$
Negative emotional arousal	$2.81 \pm 0.81$	$2.88 \pm 0.79$	-0.65	$p > 0.05$
Performance accomplishments	$3.72 \pm 0.65$	$3.89 \pm 0.63$	-1.99	$p < 0.05$

Note:  $M$  = mean;  $SD$  = standard deviation.

The application of Student's t-test showed that the career self-efficacy of the basketball players aged 17–18 years old was based more on other sources, such as verbal persuasion, positive emotional arousal and vicarious experiences, when compared to the results of the 15–16 year olds ( $p < 0.05$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the basketball players aged 15–16 and those aged 17–18 in terms of negative emotional arousal (tension, fear and anxiety) ( $t(222) = -0.65$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

The analysis of the research data showed that there were no basketball players with a low self-efficacy level (1–2.9 points) either in the cadet group aged 15–16 ( $3.63 \pm 0.51$ ) or in the junior group aged 17–18 ( $3.77 \pm 0.53$ ). However, the research revealed that a statistically significant difference exists between basketball players aged 15–16 and those aged 17–18 in terms of career self-efficacy level ( $t(222) = -2.01$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

### 4. Discussion

The study helped to assess the sources and levels of career self-efficacy of basketball players in the cadet group (15–16 years old) and the junior group (17–18 years old). The results of this research correspond to those of other studies which state that there are differences between teenagers and young people in terms of their career self-efficacy (Gianakos, 2001; Kracke, 2002). This confirms the reliability of the data collection and analysis. This study revealed that studying self-efficacy is a complex process. However, the information provided could further understanding on how to encourage teenagers and young people to pursue their career goals. We believe that only complex research which includes analysis of many sources of career self-efficacy or its components can have any practical benefit because the conclusions drawn on the basis of such studies may assist people to choose the direction of their career (Jepsen & Dickson, 2003; Taveira & Moreno, 2003). We agree with Blustein (1997) that studying the career self-efficacy of teenagers and young people is highly profitable because respondents in this age group usually have an inherent natural curiosity. In contrast, studies with children tend to be problematic and ineffective (Blustein, 1997). On the other hand, when the respondents are those who are already trying to pursue a

certain career (in our case, a career in sports), the experience of such individuals enriches career development studies (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988).

Our study revealed a reliable connection between the ability of people playing sports to use sources and levels of career self-efficacy in their teenage years and at a young age. These findings are in line with similar works by other researchers (Dawes et al., 2000; Foltz & Luzzo, 1998). Even though these studies did not consider teenagers and young people playing sports, their results were similar to those of our research: Dawes et al. (2000) determined that a low level of career self-efficacy may limit one's career development, and Foltz and Luzzo (1998) revealed that career self-efficacy may influence the behaviour of an individual when pursuing career goals.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it was found that the sources of career self-efficacy of basketball players aged 17–18 differed significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) from those aged 15–16 being based predominantly on the following sources: vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, positive emotional arousal and accomplishment in performance. The comparison of career self-efficacy among basketball players aged 15–16 and 17–18 showed that those aged 17–18 players had a higher level of career self-efficacy. It may be stated that the analysis of career self-efficacy involves the consideration of many variables. Therefore, we believe that such studies could also include analyses of career self-efficacy components and the search for career possibilities in addition to considering sources and levels of career self-efficacy. Also, it would be beneficial to pursue studies in this field and analyse the peculiarities of career self-efficacy in teenagers and young people playing sports in relation to age and gender, rather than just age.

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